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Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 IO-13 ISO-00 DHA-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01
SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /079 W
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R 161436Z MAR 77
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5281
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSYHJIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
WMCONSUL JERUSALEM 8627
USMISSION USUN NY

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 1893

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: IS, LE, JO, PFOR
SUBJECT: DISCUSSION WITH ACTING ARAB AFFAIRS ADVISER
TO THE PRIME MINISTER

REF: TEL AVIV 1275

1. BENJAMIN GUR-ARIEL, ACTING ARAB AFFAIRS ADVISER TO THE PRIME MINISTER (VICE TOLEDANO), TOLD EMBOFF MARCH 15 THAT AFTER THE VISIT MARCH 16 TO JORDAN BY A FIFTH GROUP OF ISRAELI ARABS, APPROVAL OF SUCH VISITS BY THE GOI WOULD BE SUSPENDED. GUR-ARIEL EXPLAINED THAT THE ORIGINAL GOI APPROVAL IN FEBRUARY HAD BEEN GIVEN "INFORMALLY" BY HIMSELF DURING A RABIN ABSENCE FROM THE COUNTRY. HE HAD GIVEN THE
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GO-AHEAD WHEN SUHAYL SHUKRI (WAKF TRUSTEE IN HAIFA) TOLD HIM THAT FORMER JORDANIAN PM ZAID RIFAI HAD LET IT BE KNOWN THAT THE GOJ WOULD APPROVE THE VISITS. IT IS NOW TIME, GUR-ARIEL SAID, FOR THIS MATTER TO UNDER-GO MINISTERIAL REVIEW AND FOR A DECISION TO BE TAKEN ON GOI POLICY TOWARDS FUTURE VISITS. BESIDES, HE ADDED, THE MOURNING PERIOD FOR QUEEN ALIYA IS ONLY FORTY DAYS.

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HE INDICATED THAT THERE WERE THOSE IN THE GOVERNMENT WHO OPPOSED VISITS TO JORDAN BY ISRAELI ARABS ON THE GROUND THAT IT WOULD MAKE THEM MORE NATIONALISTIC, BUT OTHERS, INCLUDING HIMSELF, BELIEVED THAT SUCH VISITS COULD LEAD TO A "NORMALIZATION" BETWEEN ISRAEL AND JORDAN. "IN ANY CASE, IF WE SAW THAT VISITS TO JORDAN WERE CAUSING PROBLEMS FOR US AMONG THE ISRAELI ARABS, WE COULD ALWAYS STOP THEM," HE SAID.

2. GUR-ARIEL REFUSED TO BE PINNED DOWN ON WHETHER HE THOUGHT THE GOI WOULD APPROVE FUTURE VISITS TO JORDAN. HOWEVER, HE HAD ONLY "POSITIVE" COMMENTS TO MAKE ABOUT THE REACTION AMONG ISRAELI ARABS RETURNING FROM AMMAN, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT THEY HAD BEEN "STUNNED" BY THE EXTENT OF ANTI-PLO FEELING AMONG THE JORDANIANS, THAT THEY WERE PLEASED BY THE WARMTH OF THE JORDANIAN RECEPTION, AND THAT THEY WERE HOPEFUL THAT SOME MEANS COULD EVENTUALLY BE DEVISED TO MAKE THE PILGRIMAGE TO MECCA. (GUR-ARIEL MENTIONED A RUMOR, WHICH HE COULD NEITHER TRACE NOR CONFIRM, THAT THE GOJ WAS WILLING TO ISSUE TEMPORARY JORDANIAN PASSPORTS TO ISRAELI ARABS WHO WISHED TO MAKE THE HAJJ.)

3. ASKED WHETHER HE HAD ALSO MADE THE DECISION TO AUTHORIZE ISRAELI ARABS TO VISIT LEBANON, GUR-ARIEL REPLIED THAT HE HAD NOT. THIS DECISION HAD BEEN MADE BY PRIME MINISTER RABIN AND A FEW OTHER MINISTERS. GUR-ARIEL PERSONALLY SEEMED TO HAVE RESERVATIONS ABOUT THESE VISITS, PARTICULARLY BY MOSLEM ISRAELI ARABS, AND
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SAID HE HAD WONDERED IF THE SOUTH LEBANESE CHRISTIANS WOULD MAKE PROBLEMS FOR MOSLEMS VISITING FROM ISRAEL.

4. COMMENT: GUR-ARIEL, AN UNASSUMING AND CAREFUL CIVIL SERVANT WHO PREVIOUSLY HAD SERVED FOR THREE YEARS AS TOLEDANO'S PROFESSIONAL BACK-UP, DID NOT INDICATE THAT IT SEEMED UNUSUAL FOR SOMEONE OF HIS MODEST RANK TO MAKE A DECISION WHICH WOULD NORMALLY BE CONSIDERED TO BE PREGNANT WITH NATIONAL POLICY IMPLICATIONS.

5. ANY GOI DECISION TO FOREGO APPROVAL OF FURTHER VISITS TO JORDAN BY ISRAELI ARABS WOULD NOT APPEAR TO BE CONSISTENT WITH THE "OPEN BRIDGES" AND "GOOD FENCE" POLICIES, AND INDEED WITH THE OFT-HEARD ISRAELI COM-PLAINT THAT THE ARABS OUGHT TO "MAKE THE TRAFFIC ON THE BRIDGES TWO-WAY." THUS, WE WOULD ANTICIPATE THAT THE GOI WOULD COMPLETE ITS REVIEW WITH A "POSITIVE" RESPONSE. (IT OCCURS TO US THAT THE REVIEW ITSELF MAY HAVE

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PARTIALLY BEEN CAUSED BY SOME NEGATIVE RESPONSE FROM
SAUDI ARABIA TO PROBES ON ISRAELI ARAB TRIPS TO MECCA).
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
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Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
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Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
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Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 TEL AVIV 1275
Retention: 0
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Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3086448
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: DISCUSSION WITH ACTING ARAB AFFAIRS ADVISER TO THE PRIME MINISTER
TAGS: PFOR, PINS, IS, LE, JO, (GUR-ARIEL, BENJAMIN)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/babc09b7-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
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Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009